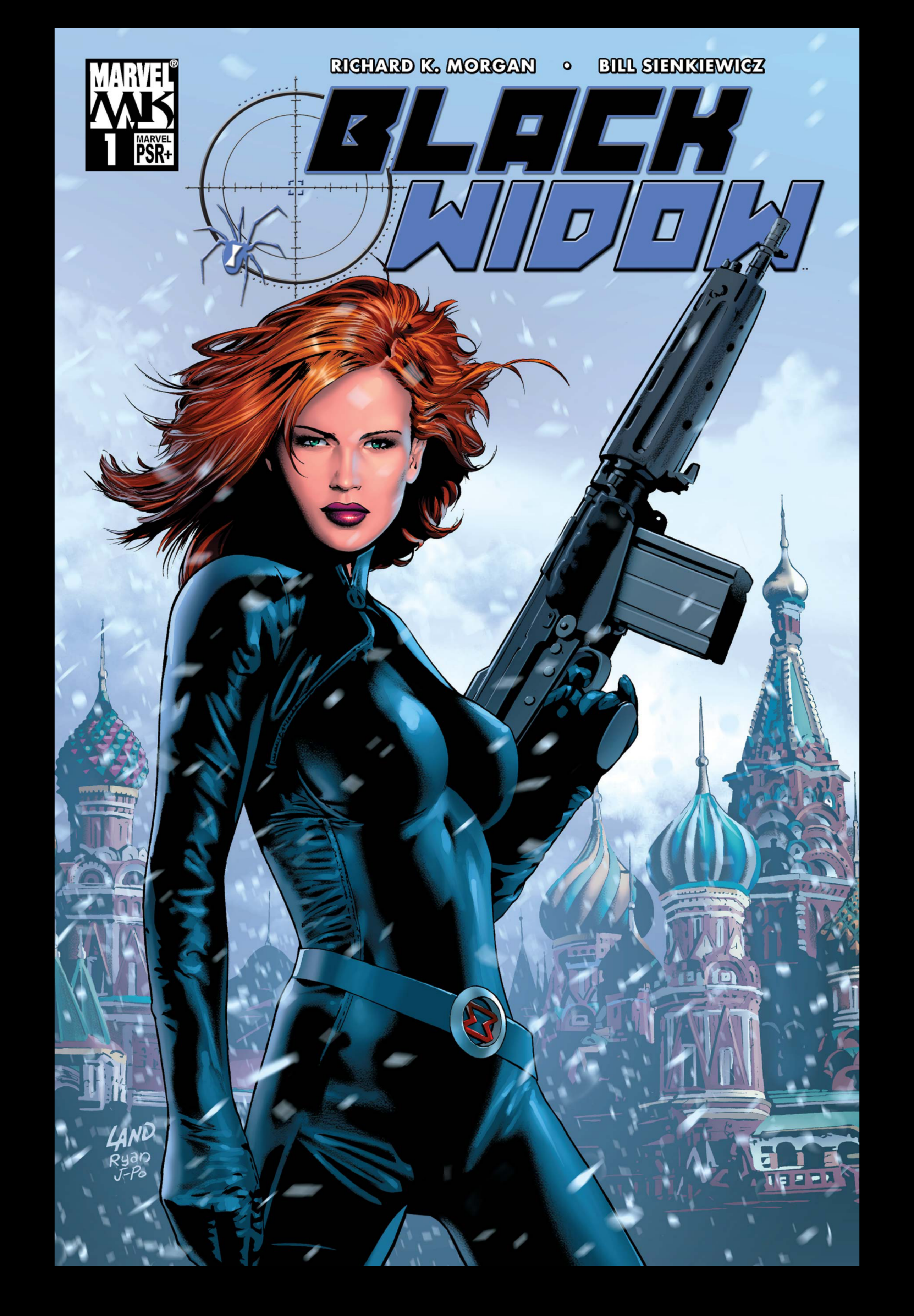
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RICHARD K. MORGAN • BILL SIENKIEWICZ
BLACK WIDOW
LAND
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Part 1: Right to a Life

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LONDON
YOU LOOK BEAUTIFUL, ANNA. NOW COME ON, WE'RE GOING TO BE *LATE*.

DO YOU WANT TO DRIVE, DARLING?
IN *THESE* HEELS--ARE YOU KIDDING?

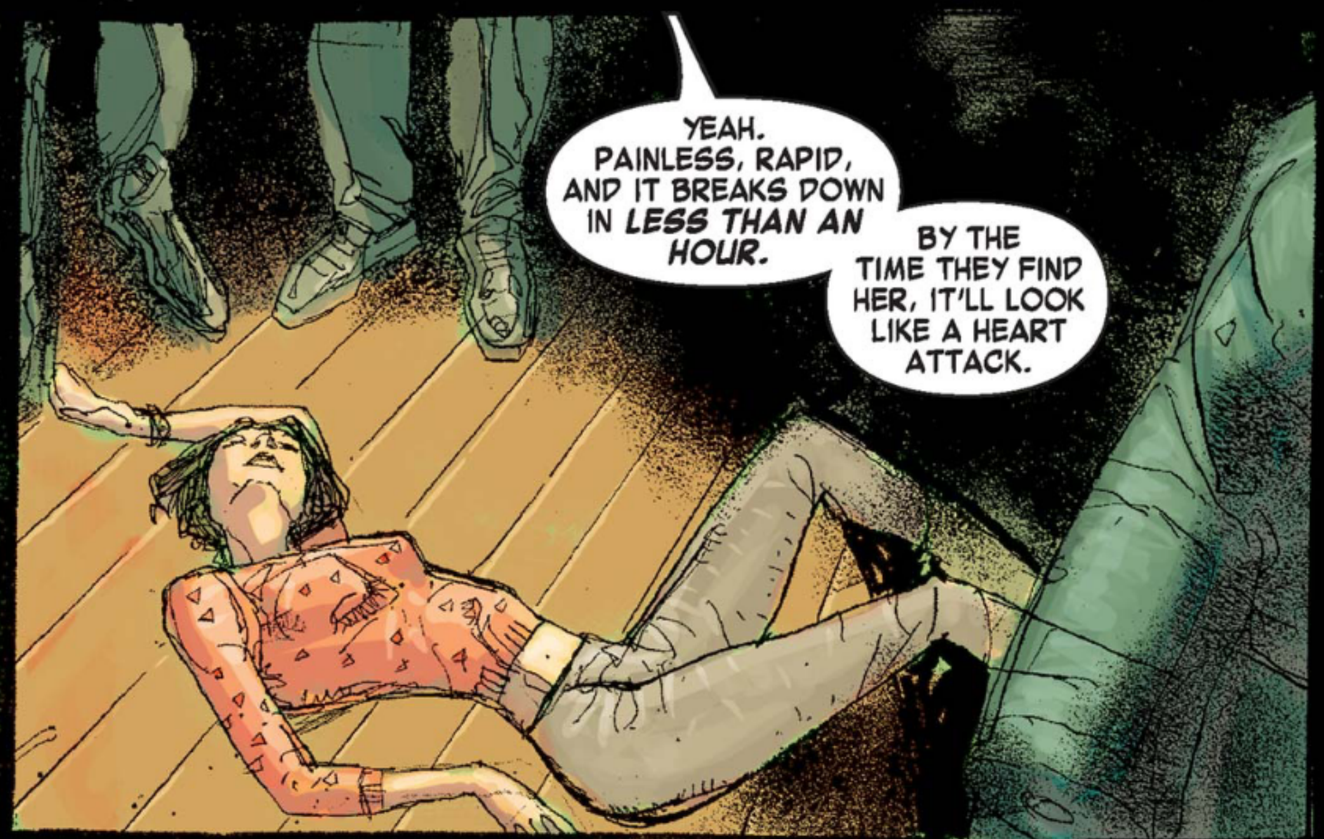
FELLAWOOM

...UNTIL A WOMAN HAS A RIGHT TO CONTROL HER OWN BODY, THERE WILL BE NO--
ALABAMA

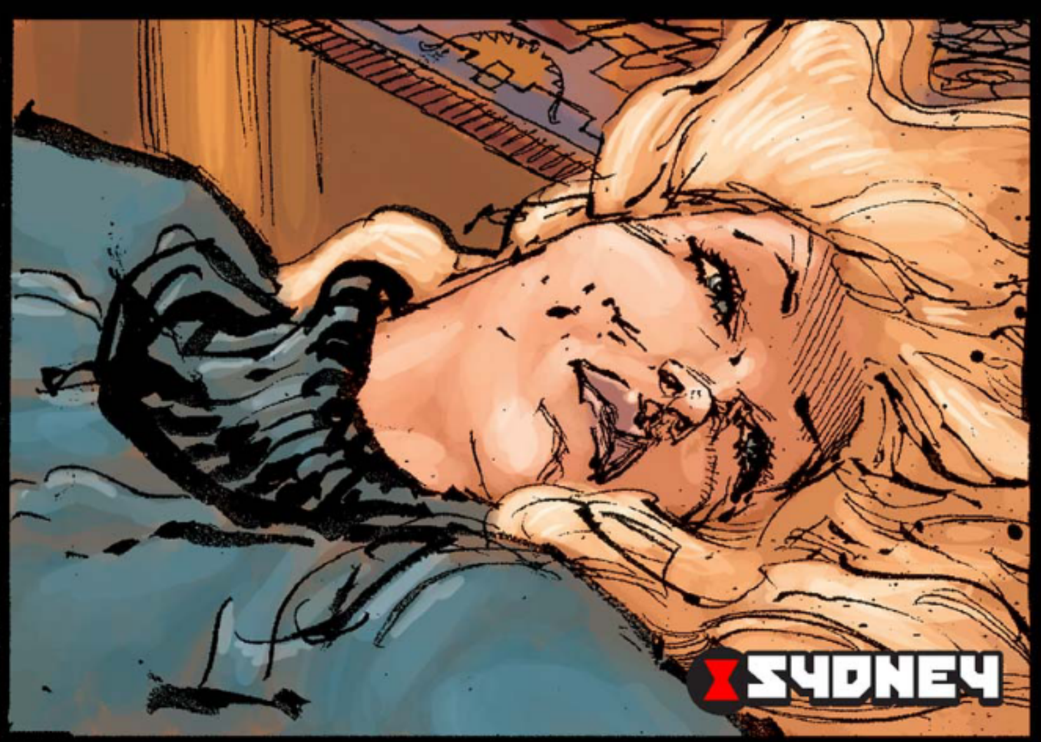
BLAM

STACY! I THINK SHE'S--

--DEAD. WELL, I'M IMPRESSED.
X OSAKA

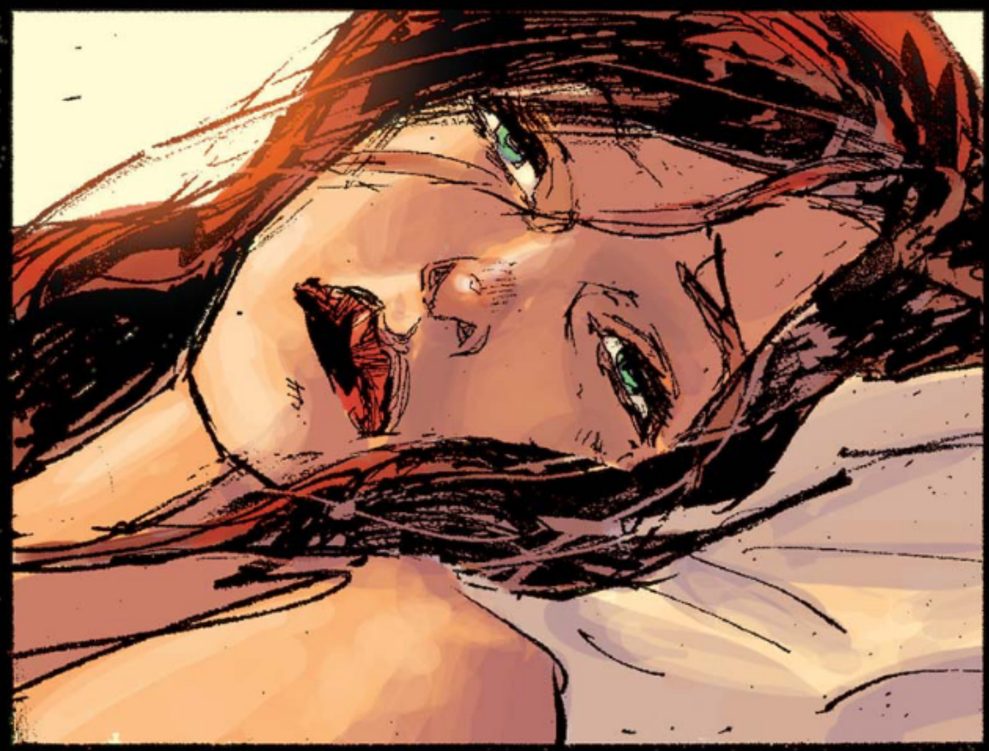

YEAH. PAINLESS, RAPID, AND IT BREAKS DOWN IN LESS THAN AN HOUR.
BY THE TIME THEY FIND HER, IT'LL LOOK LIKE A HEART ATTACK.

SO WHAT WAS THAT STUFF, ANYWAY?
OH. SPIDER VENOM.


X SYDNEY

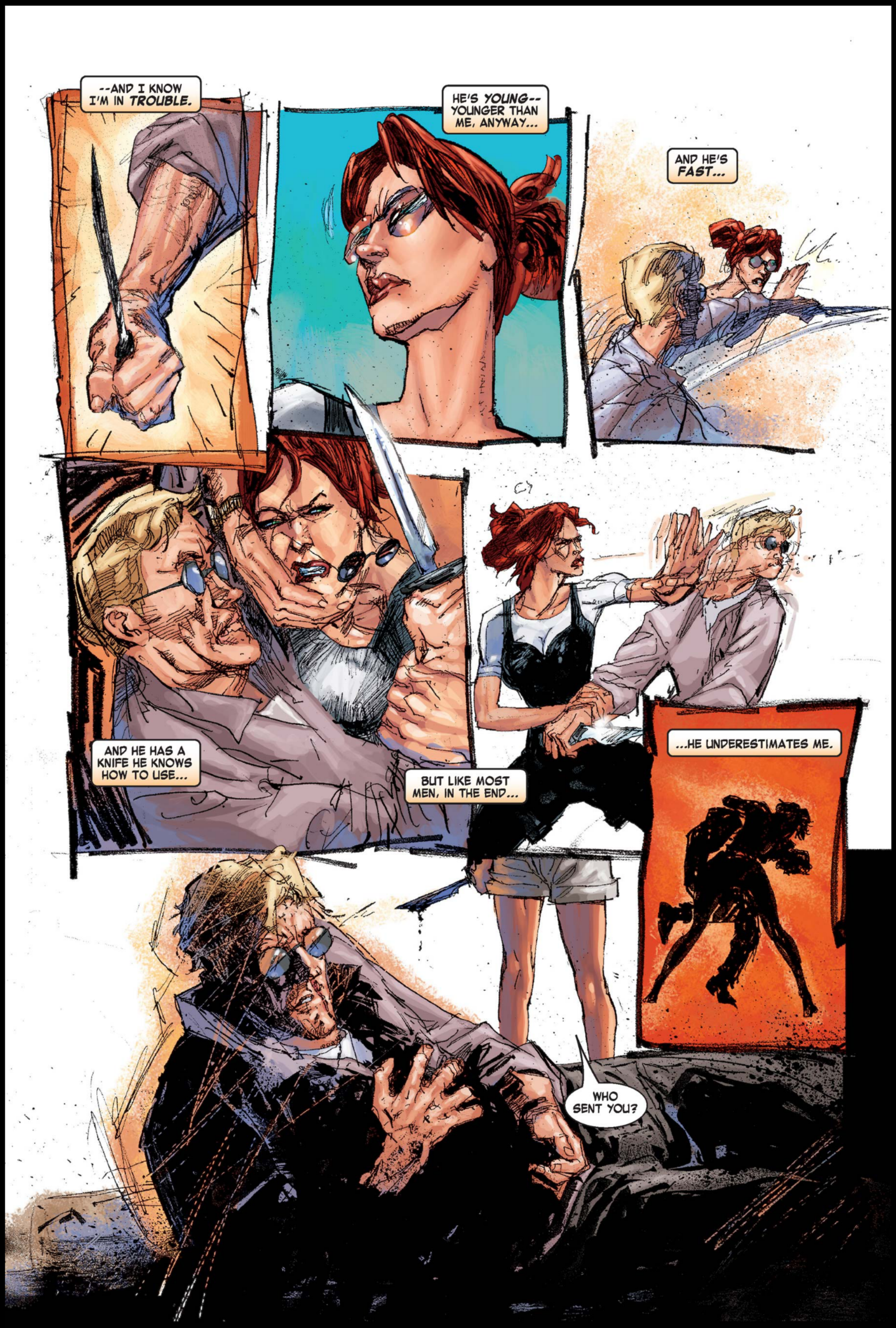
X SHANGHAI

X ARIZONA



THAT'S *THREE* BAD NIGHTS IN A ROW. THOUGHT I HAD THE *GUILT* BEATEN LONG AGO.
OUTSIDE OF *CHEMICALS*, THERE'S ONLY ONE CURE I KNOW FOR BAD DREAMS AND BROKEN SLEEP.
LUCKILY, I KEEP IT CLOSE AT HAND.

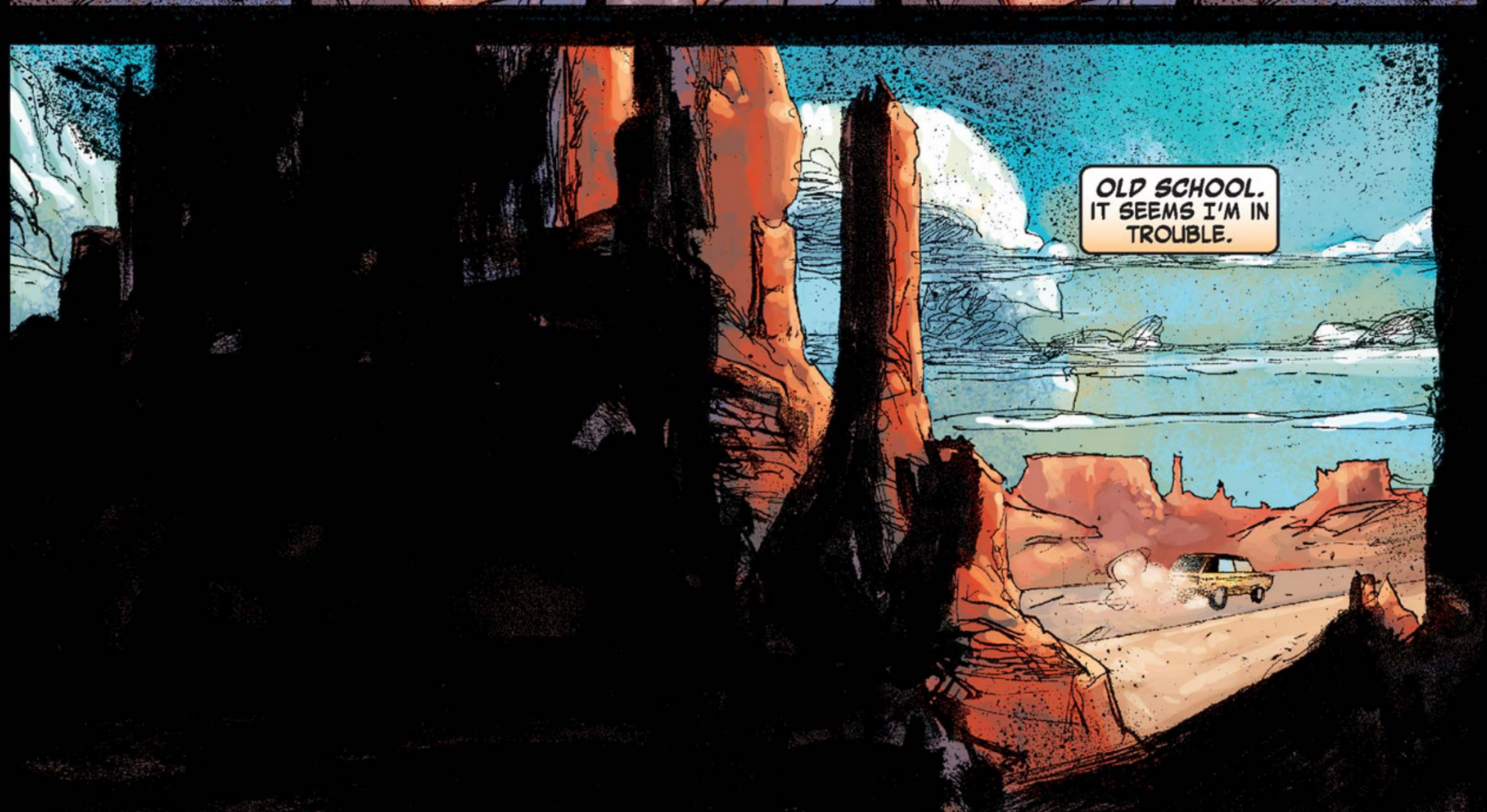
ROCK CLIMBING...
...IT BEATS SCALING TALL BUILDINGS AND STEALING STATE SECRETS FOR A LIVING. AND BEING RETIRED MEANS I GET TO DO IT...
...WHENEVER THE HELL I WANT!
NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH TROUBLES TODAY, HUH.
SAY, YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ENGINES?
LIVE OUT HERE, YOU *HAVE TO.* LET ME TAKE A LOOK.
SOMETHING CHANGES IN HIS *FACE*--


--AND I KNOW I'M IN TROUBLE.
HE'S YOUNG-- YOUNGER THAN ME, ANYWAY...
AND HE'S FAST...
AND HE HAS A KNIFE HE KNOWS HOW TO USE...
BUT LIKE MOST MEN, IN THE END...
...HE UNDERESTIMATES ME.
WHO SENT YOU?

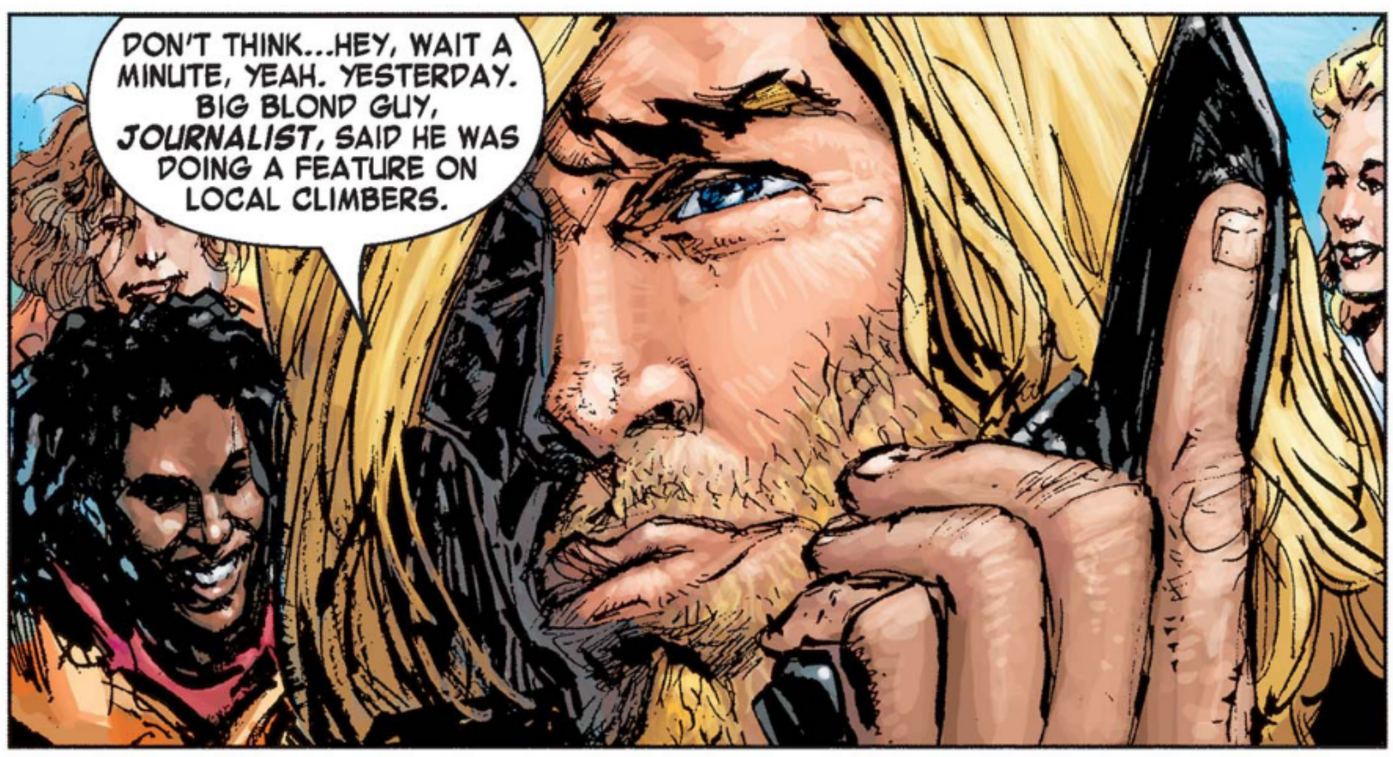
UNLESS I GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL, YOU'RE GOING TO BLEED TO DEATH OUT HERE. NOW WHO SENT YOU?

SUIT YOURSELF. SUN'S ON THE RISE. I CAN WAIT.
BUT SO, IT SEEMS, CAN HE...

...HIS BLOOD RUNS OUT INTO THE DESERT...
...AND THE SAND DRINKS IT UP...
...AND HE DOESN'T SAY A WORD.
IT TAKES HIM OVER AN HOUR TO DIE.
AND HE DOESN'T SAY A DAMNED WORD.

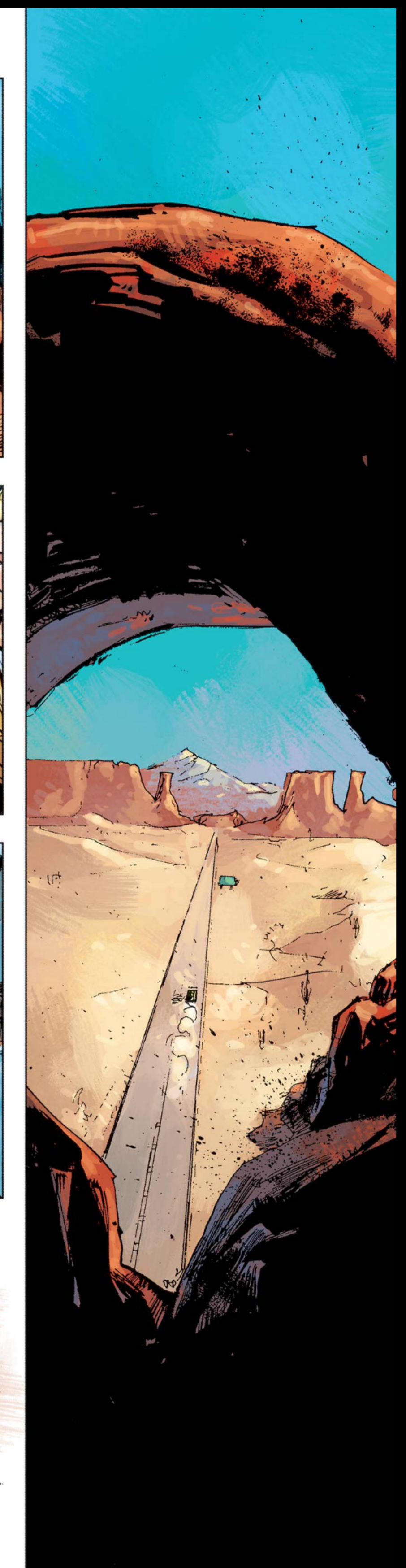

OLD SCHOOL. IT SEEMS I'M IN TROUBLE.

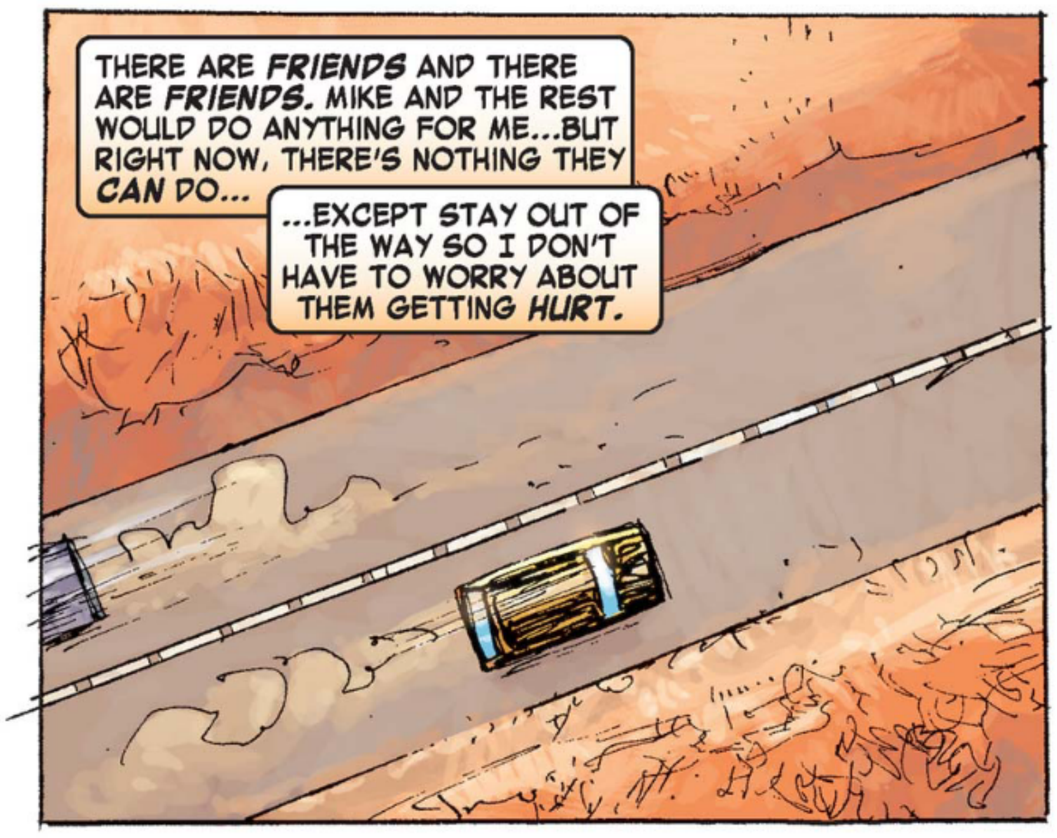
MIKE, IT'S NATASHA. I THINK I'M GOING TO BE LATE.
LISTEN, HAS ANYBODY UP AT THE CLUB BEEN ASKING ABOUT ME?

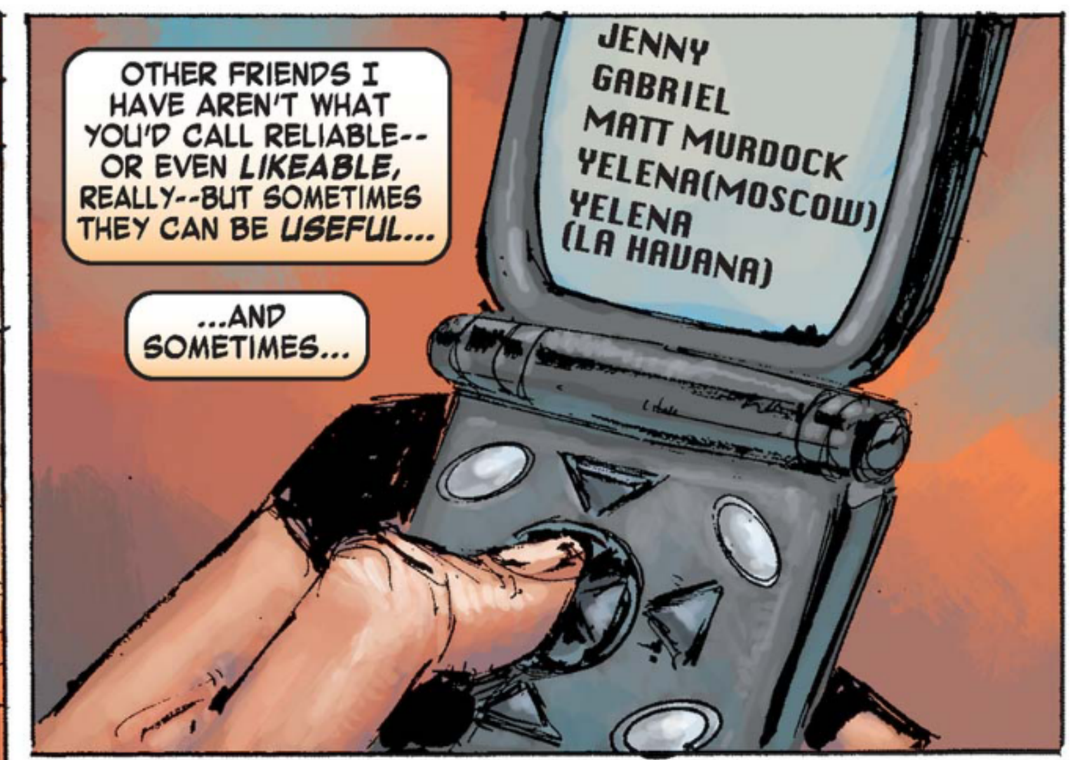

DON'T THINK...HEY, WAIT A MINUTE, YEAH. YESTERDAY. BIG BLOND GUY, JOURNALIST, SAID HE WAS DOING A FEATURE ON LOCAL CLIMBERS.

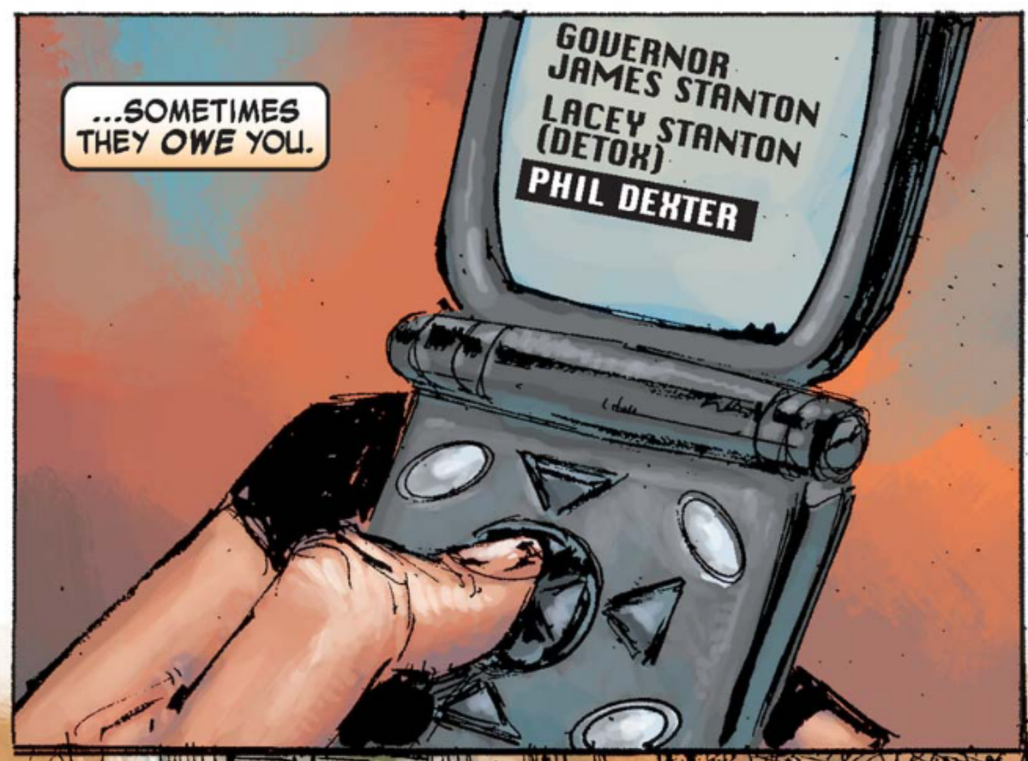
DID HE FIND YOU YET?

"YEAH, I THINK HE DID."




THERE ARE *FRIENDS* AND THERE ARE *FRIENDS.* MIKE AND THE REST WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR ME...BUT RIGHT NOW, THERE'S NOTHING THEY *CAN* DO...
...EXCEPT STAY OUT OF THE WAY SO I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM GETTING *HURT.*


OTHER FRIENDS I HAVE AREN'T WHAT YOU'D CALL RELIABLE--OR EVEN *LIKEABLE,* REALLY--BUT SOMETIMES THEY CAN BE *USEFUL...*
...AND SOMETIMES...
JENNY
GABRIEL
MATT MURDOCK
YELENA(MOSCOW)
YELENA (LA HAVANA)


...SOMETIMES THEY *OWE* YOU.
GOVERNOR JAMES STANTON
LACEY STANTON (DETOX)
PHIL DEXTER

DEXTER SECURE INQUIRY SERVICES.
HEY, PHIL. YOU'RE ANSWERING YOUR OWN PHONE. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LATEST *BLONDE?* SILICONE LEAK?

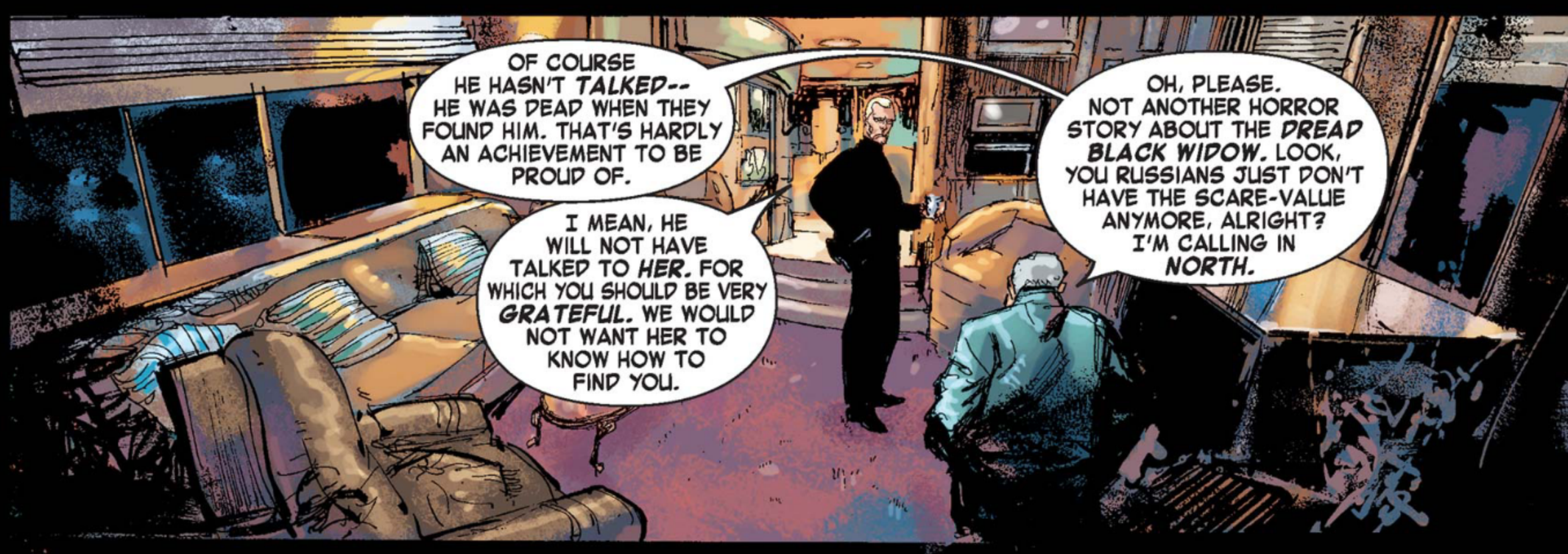
VERY FREAKING FUNNY. WHAT DO YOU WANT, NAT?
HOW ABOUT A DRINK?
THE LAST TIME WE HAD A DRINK, I SPENT THE NEXT MONTH PICKING CHECHEN SHRAPNEL OUT OF MY ASS. I'M NOT COMING TO *DEAD LIZARDSVILLE,* ARIZONA FOR A REPEAT PERFORMANCE.
A-F
G-P

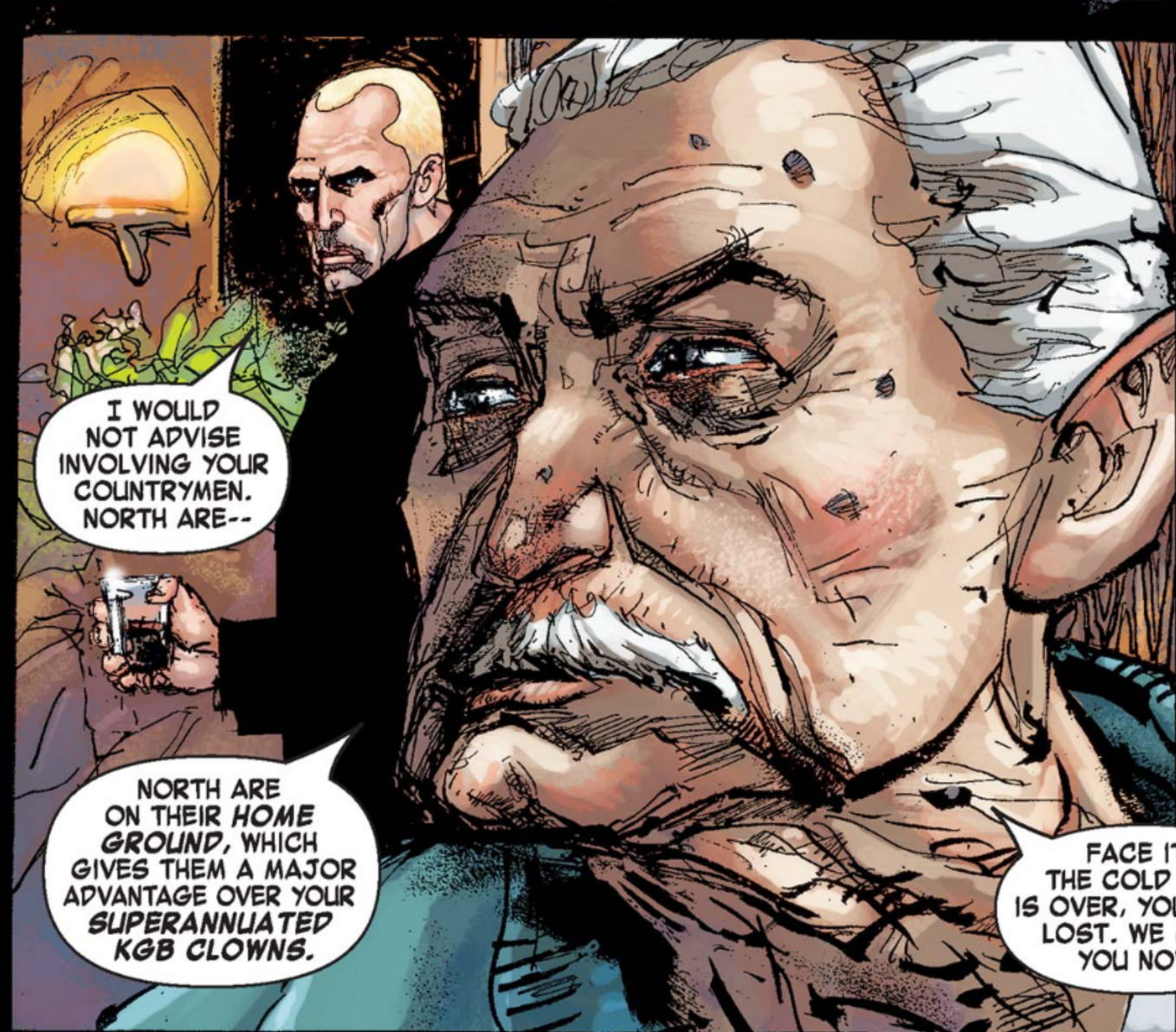
I'M NOT *IN* ARIZONA, PHIL.
Albuquerque
248 Mi.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN
I SUPPOSE YOU'VE SEEN THIS?

....FOUND BESIDE AN ARIZONA HIGHWAY EARLIER TODAY. THE BODY HAD BEEN SAVAGELY MUTILATED IN WHAT POLICE BELIEVE...

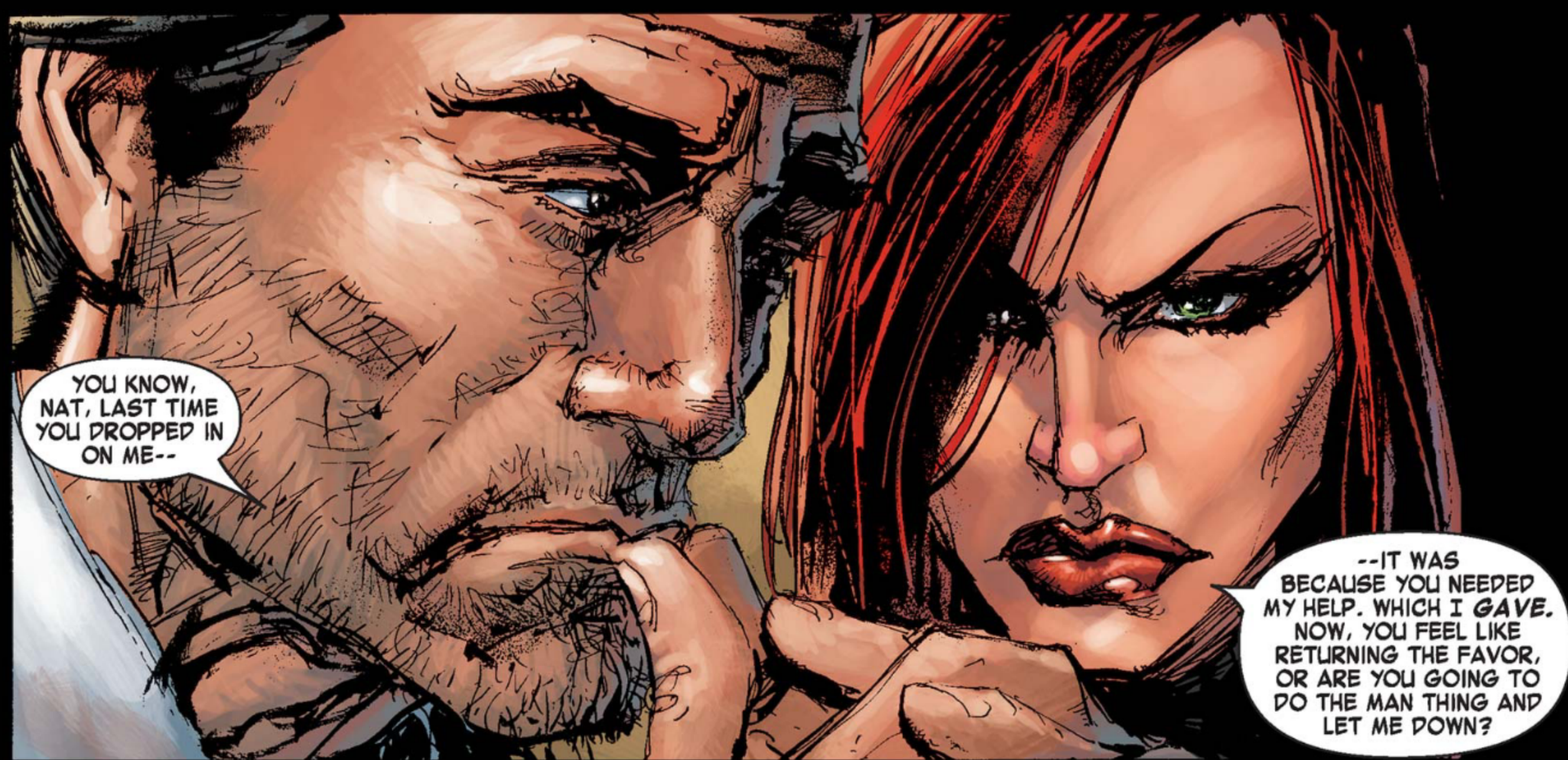
YOU TOLD ME YOUR PEOPLE WERE RELIABLE.
THEY ARE. THIS ONE WILL NOT HAVE TALKED.


OF COURSE HE HASN'T TALKED-- HE WAS DEAD WHEN THEY FOUND HIM. THAT'S HARDLY AN ACHIEVEMENT TO BE PROUD OF.
I MEAN, HE WILL NOT HAVE TALKED TO HER. FOR WHICH YOU SHOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL. WE WOULD NOT WANT HER TO KNOW HOW TO FIND YOU.
OH, PLEASE. NOT ANOTHER HORROR STORY ABOUT THE DREAD BLACK WIDOW. LOOK, YOU RUSSIANS JUST DON'T HAVE THE SCARE-VALUE ANYMORE, ALRIGHT? I'M CALLING IN NORTH.


I WOULD NOT ADVISE INVOLVING YOUR COUNTRYMEN. NORTH ARE--
NORTH ARE ON THEIR HOME GROUND, WHICH GIVES THEM A MAJOR ADVANTAGE OVER YOUR SUPERANNUATED KGB CLOWNS.
FACE IT, THE COLD WAR IS OVER, YOU GUYS LOST. WE OWN YOU NOW.

...THE BODY HAD BEEN SAVAGELY MUTILATED IN WHAT POLICE
"MUTILATED"?
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

HE HAD A KNIFE, PHIL. I USED IT ON HIM. GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?

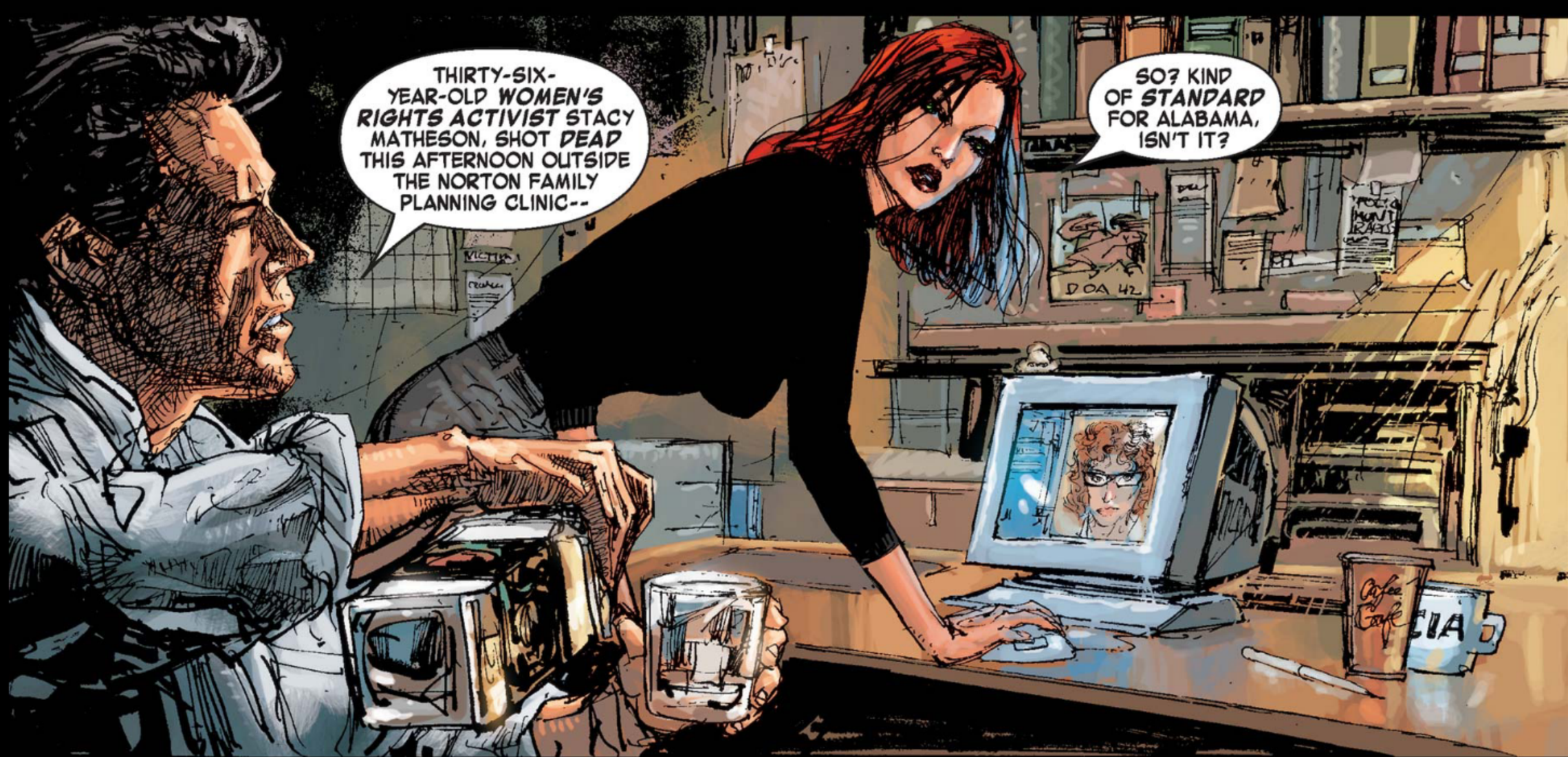

YOU KNOW, NAT, LAST TIME YOU DROPPED IN ON ME--
--IT WAS BECAUSE YOU NEEDED MY HELP. WHICH I GAVE. NOW, YOU FEEL LIKE RETURNING THE FAVOR, OR ARE YOU GOING TO DO THE MAN THING AND LET ME DOWN?

OKAY, OKAY. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?

JESUS! DID YOU HAVE TO TAKE HIS FINGER?
THE RING WOULDN'T COME OFF. PLUS, I FIGURE MAYBE HIS PRINTS ARE ON FILE SOMEWHERE, RIGHT?
YEAH, MAYBE. DON'T COUNT ON IT, THOUGH. IF THIS GUY WAS A SPOOK, WHOEVER HE WAS WORKING FOR WILL HAVE MADE SURE THERE ARE NO RECORDS.
YOU GOT SOME HEAVY GAMBLING DEBTS YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME ABOUT, NAT? BECAUSE IF NOT, THERE'S ONLY ONE EXPLANATION FOR THIS THAT I CAN SEE.
THIS IS YOUR PAST COMING TO CALL.

I CAN GET SOME FRIENDS TO LOOK AT ALL THIS STUFF FOR US ON MONDAY. BUT RIGHT NOW THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT *YOU* TO LOOK AT.

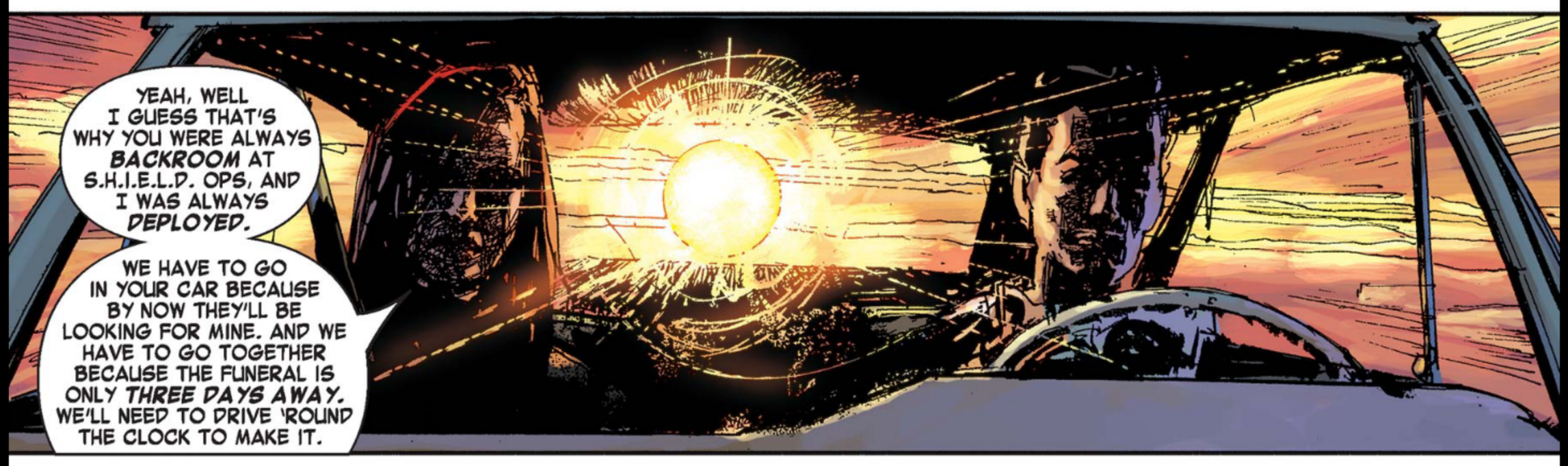
NEWS UPDATE: BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

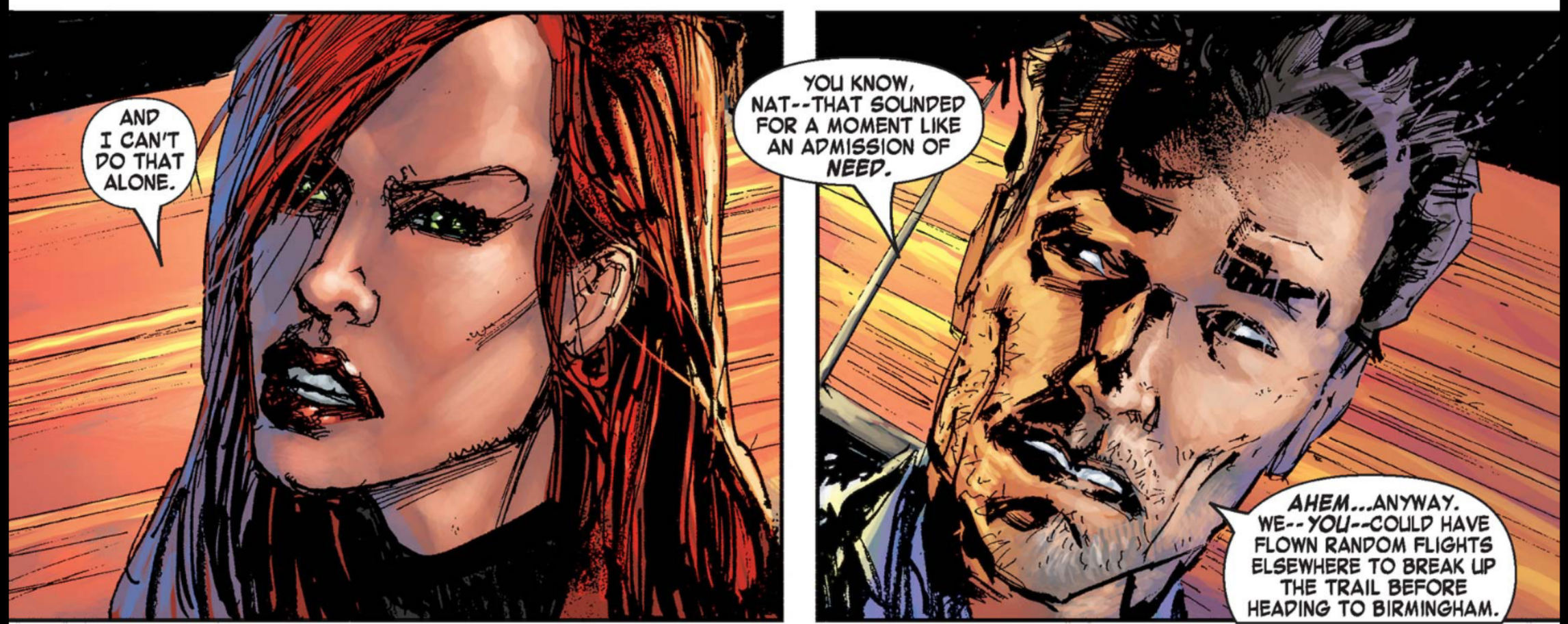

THIRTY-SIX-YEAR-OLD *WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVIST* STACY MATHESON, SHOT *DEAD* THIS AFTERNOON OUTSIDE THE NORTON FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC--
SO? KIND OF *STANDARD* FOR ALABAMA, ISN'T IT?

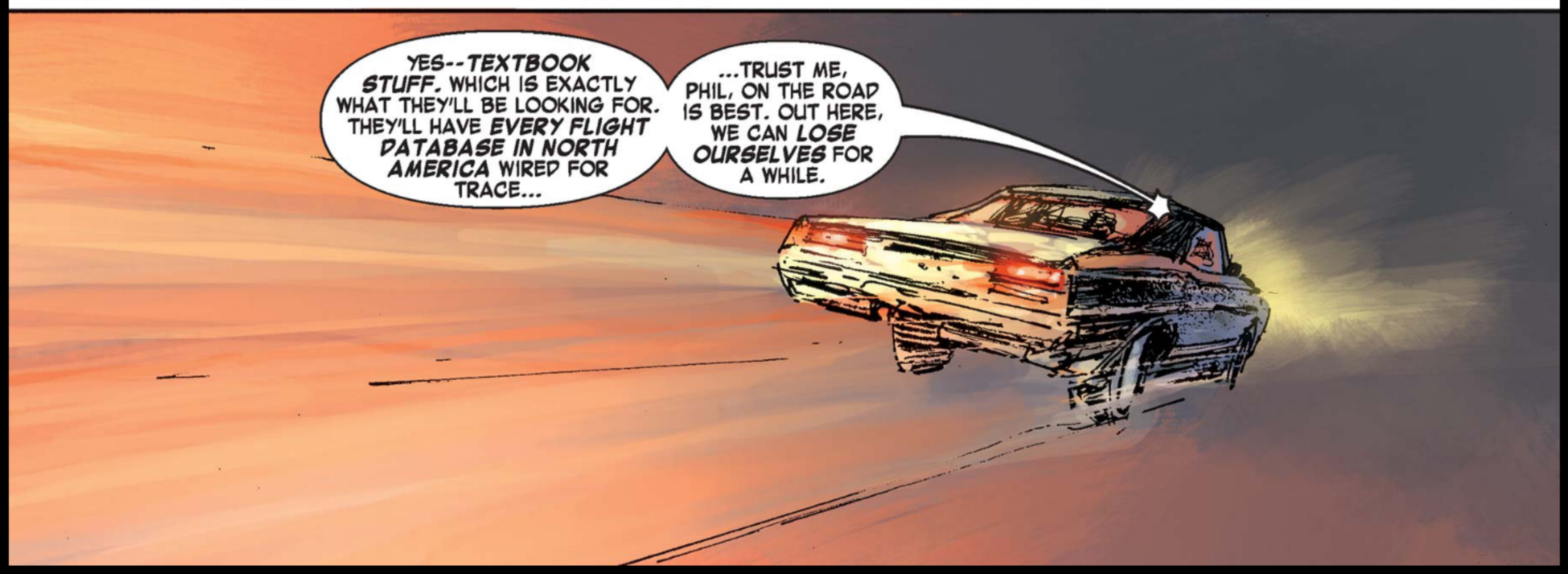
YES, EXCEPT STACY MATHESON'S REAL NAME WAS *STEFANYA MELNIKOVA.* UNTIL SHE RETIRED ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO, SHE WAS A *KGB DEEP-COVER OPERATIVE.* SOUND FAMILIAR?

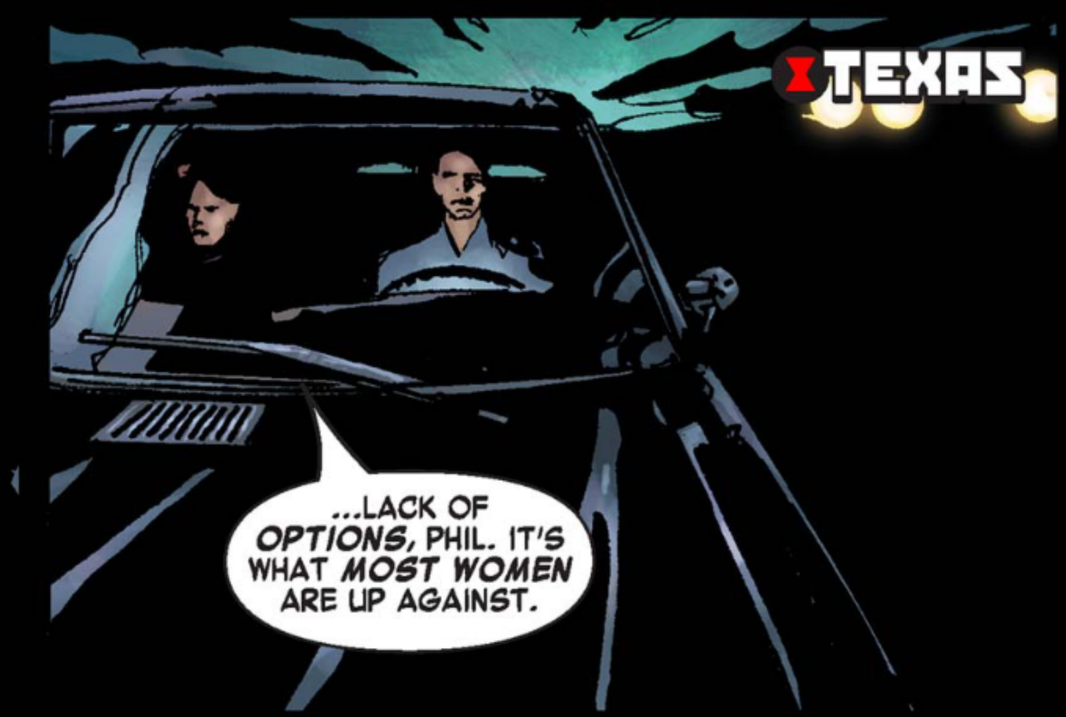
NO. BUT IT MIGHT ONCE WE GET THERE.
WE?

DON'T SULK, PHIL. IT RUINS THAT SLIGHTLY SEEDY COOL YOU HAVE.
I'M NOT SULKING. I JUST DON'T SEE WHY I HAVE TO COME WITH YOU AND WHY WE HAVE TO GO IN MY CAR.


YEAH, WELL I GUESS THAT'S WHY YOU WERE ALWAYS BACKROOM AT S.H.I.E.L.D. OPS, AND I WAS ALWAYS DEPLOYED.
WE HAVE TO GO IN YOUR CAR BECAUSE BY NOW THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR MINE. AND WE HAVE TO GO TOGETHER BECAUSE THE FUNERAL IS ONLY THREE DAYS AWAY. WE'LL NEED TO DRIVE 'ROUND THE CLOCK TO MAKE IT.


AND I CAN'T DO THAT ALONE.
YOU KNOW, NAT--THAT SOUNDED FOR A MOMENT LIKE AN ADMISSION OF NEED.
AHEM...ANYWAY. WE--YOU--COULD HAVE FLOWN RANDOM FLIGHTS ELSEWHERE TO BREAK UP THE TRAIL BEFORE HEADING TO BIRMINGHAM.

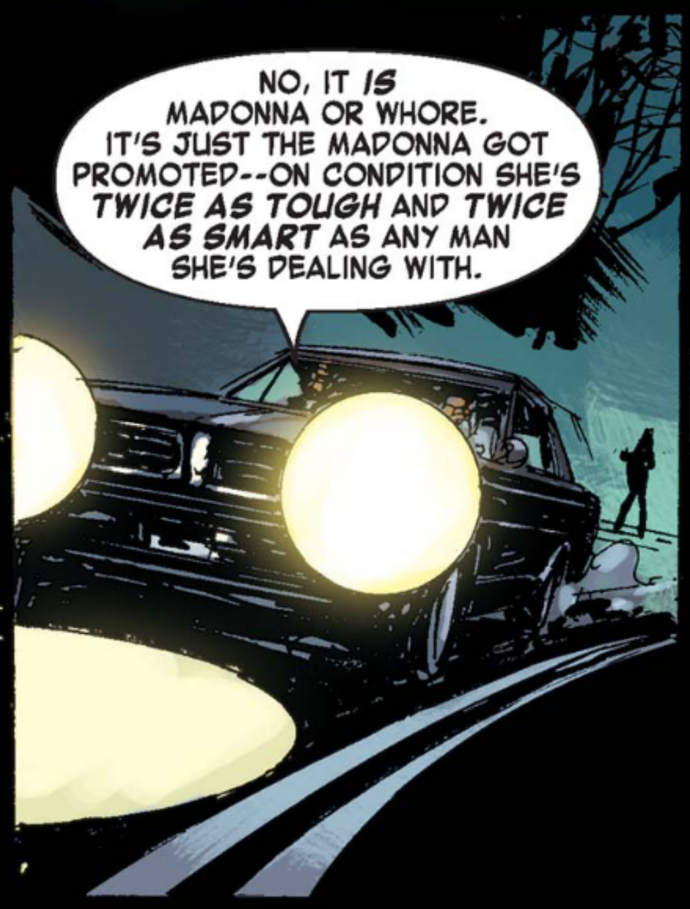

YES--TEXTBOOK STUFF. WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR. THEY'LL HAVE EVERY FLIGHT DATABASE IN NORTH AMERICA WIRED FOR TRACE...
...TRUST ME, PHIL, ON THE ROAD IS BEST. OUT HERE, WE CAN LOSE OURSELVES FOR A WHILE.


X TEXAS
...LACK OF OPTIONS, PHIL. IT'S WHAT MOST WOMEN ARE UP AGAINST.

"IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED, YOU'VE GOT TWO CHOICES...

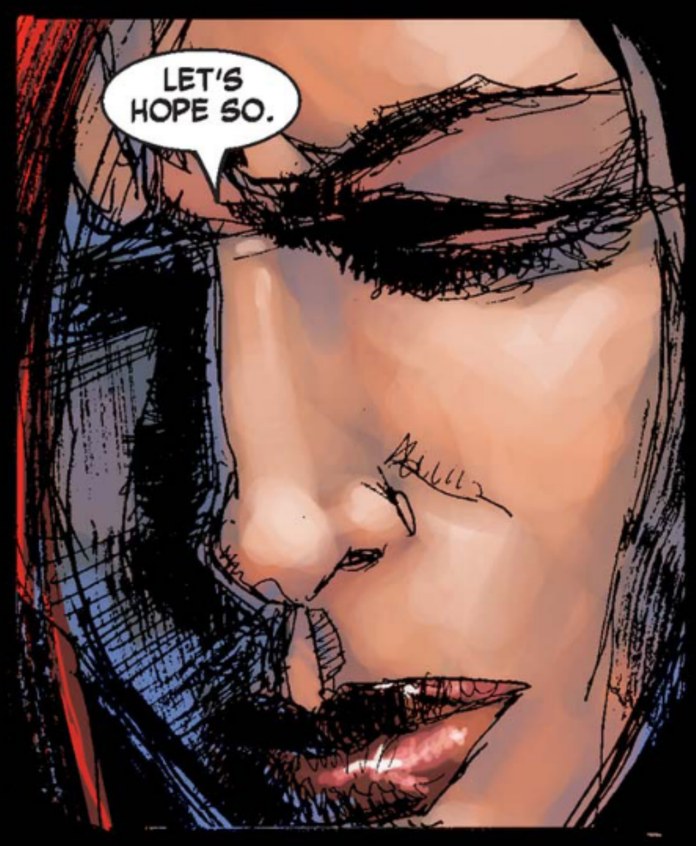
"...POLE DANCER OR HARD-FACED HARRIDAN."

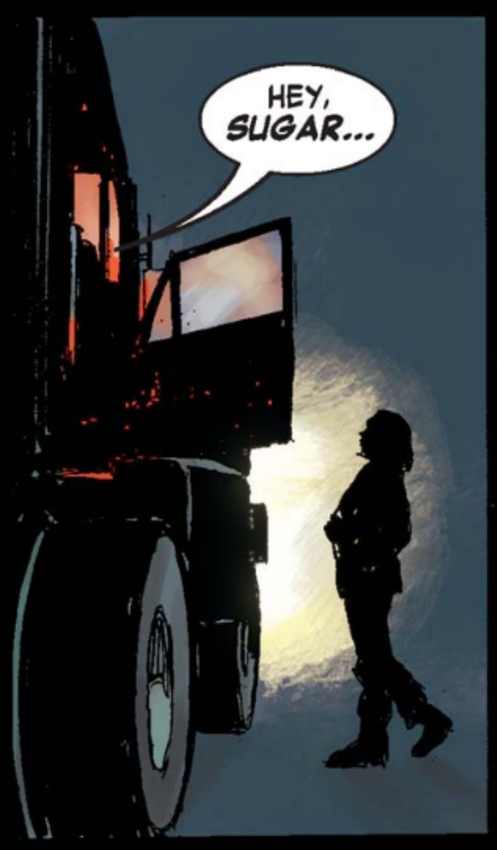
HEY-- IT BEATS MADONNA OR WHORE, RIGHT?


NO, IT IS MADONNA OR WHORE. IT'S JUST THE MADONNA GOT PROMOTED--ON CONDITION SHE'S TWICE AS TOUGH AND TWICE AS SMART AS ANY MAN SHE'S DEALING WITH.

"ANYTHING LESS AND THEY'LL RIP HER TO SHREDS."

THAT YOU, IS IT, NAT? TWICE AS TOUGH AND TWICE AS SMART?


LET'S HOPE SO.


HEY, SUGAR...

...YOU LOOKIN' FOR A RIDE?

COFFEE?
I'LL GET IT TO GO. YOU FILL UP.
TRUCK
24-
FOO
ROY'S HOUSE OF ASPS
2MI

HEY, WE'RE NOT STOPPING FOR THE SNAKE FARM?
VERY FUNNY. CHECK THE OIL, WILL YOU? THIS HEAP OF YOURS WAS OVERHEATING BACK THERE FOR A WHILE.

YEAH, MAYBE BECAUSE THIS HEAP DOESN'T USUALLY RUN TWELVE HOURS NON-STOP CROSS-COUNTRY. SHE'S GETTING TOO OLD TO TREAT THAT ROUGH.
AND SHE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE.

UH-UH, SUGAR. WHERE YOU GOIN'?

YOU AIN'T PAID FOR THE RIDE YET.
I DON'T WANT A RIDE ANYMORE.

WELL, MAYBE YOU DON'T, SALLY ANNE, BUT YOU JUST RODE TWO HUNDRED MILES WITH ME AND JAY. I FIGURE THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS SHOW US SOME APPRECIATION.

AIN'T GOIN' TO BE THE FIRST TIME FOR YOU NEITHER, AM I RIGHT OR AM I RIGHT?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING, RIGHT?

ARE YOU *KIDDING?* YOU WANT TO BE ALL OVER THE MORNING NEWS? THIS IS HARDLY THE TIME FOR PLAYING *SUPER HERO.*
SO YOU'RE JUST GOING TO *WATCH?*
I'VE WATCHED WORSE. I WAS SECONDED TO *CIA COVERT OPS* IN GUATEMALA FOR FIVE YEARS. AND NICK FURY HAD ME WORKING WITH THE *AFGHAN WARLORDS.* THIS LITTLE TRAGEDY I CAN LIVE WITH.

YEAH, WELL I *CAN'T.*

NATASHA...

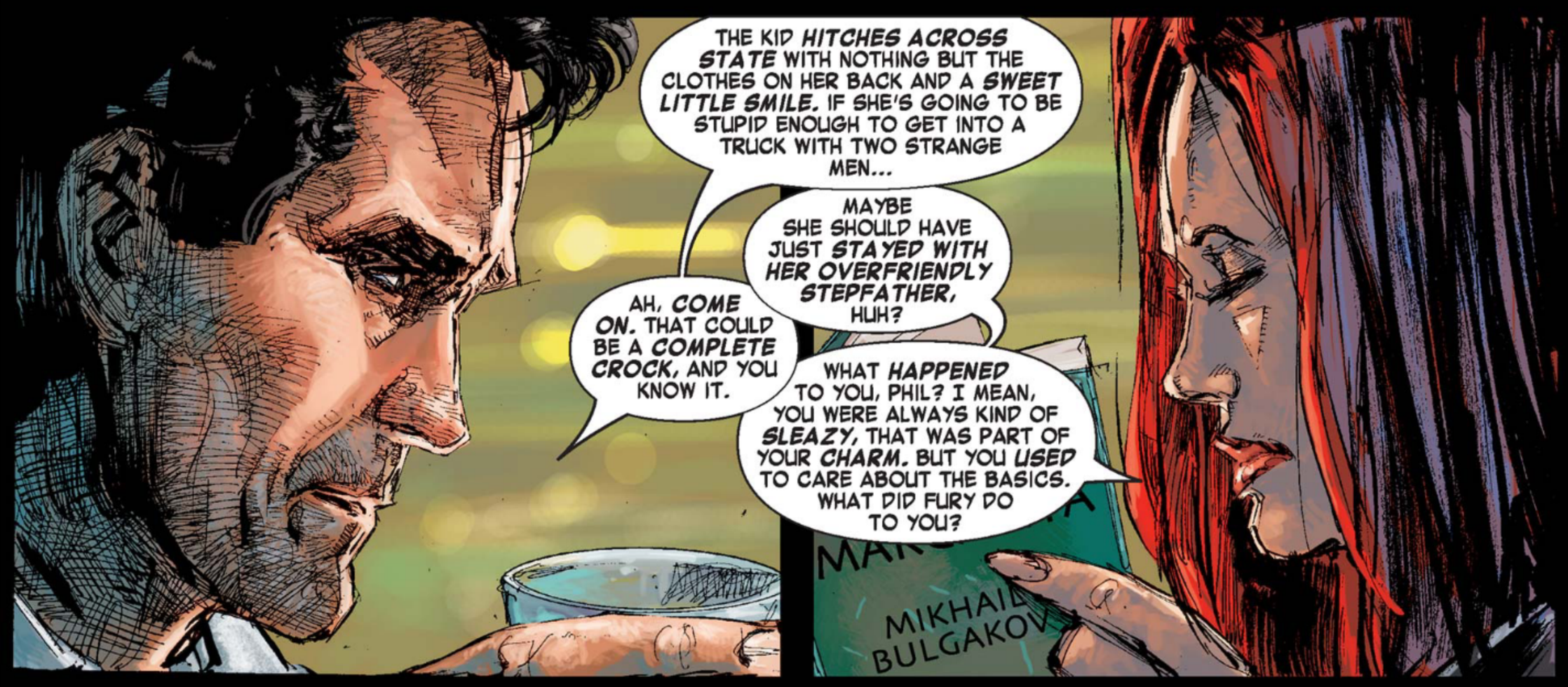
THAT'S *ENOUGH.* LET HER GO.

THIS AIN'T YOUR BUSINESS, SUGAR. SO *BACK OFF.*

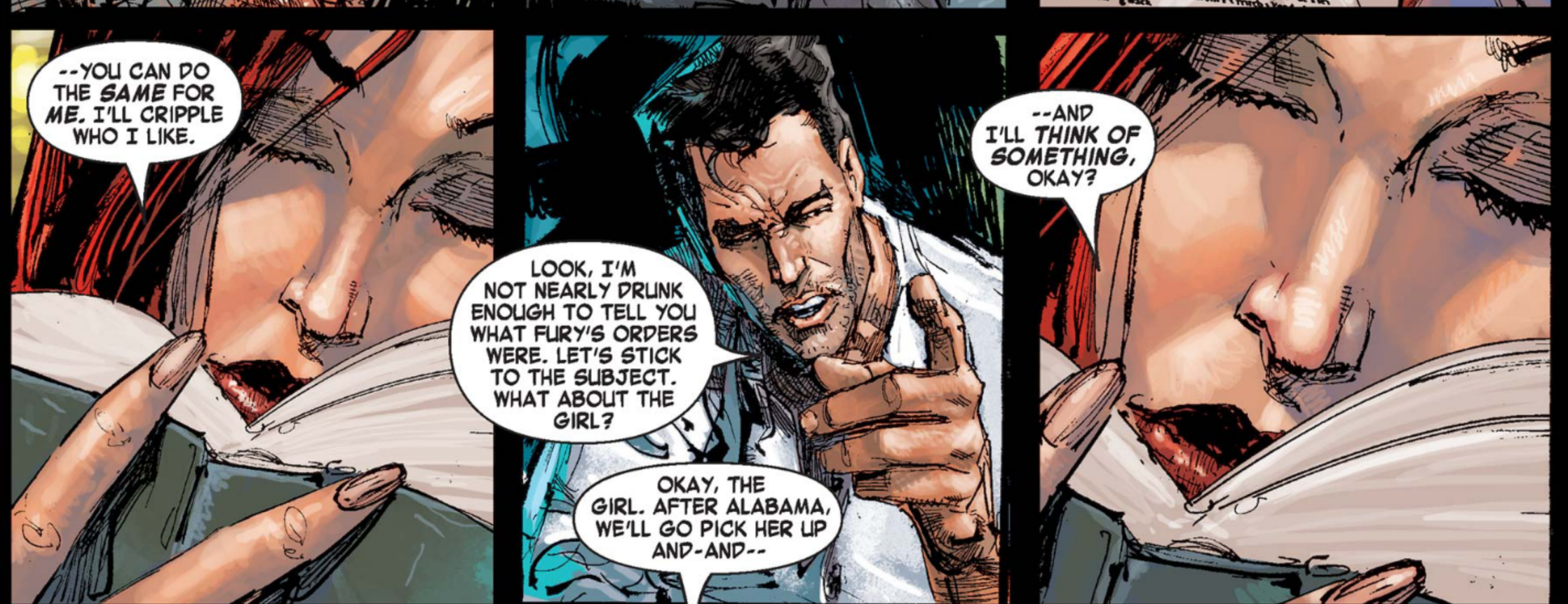
I PROMISE YOU THIS: IF YOU DON'T LET HER GO RIGHT NOW, NEITHER OF YOU WILL EVER WALK AGAIN.
I TOLD YOU TO BACK OFF, COW--
--NOW TAKE YOUR COFFEE AND GO--
BLAM!
HA!

GREAT. JUST WHAT WE NEED.
WANT TO GO IN AND GET AUTOGRAPHS?
YOU OKAY?
I... I THINK SO.
MY SIDE HURTS. THAT ONE, HE PUNCHED ME IN THE RIBS A FEW MILES BACK WHEN I WOULDN'T, WOULDN'T--
PHIL--
--CAN'T BELIEVE YOU--
PHIL!!! GET THE CAR, NOW!!
NOW WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--
DRAGONS
RIGHT SIDE
SUI-CIDE
JUST A MINUTE.
NAT, YOU CANNOT BE SERIOUS ABOUT--
KKRAK!
I KEEP MY PROMISES, PHIL.

COULD YOU PLEASE NOT DO THAT SORT OF THING ANYMORE?
OKLAHOMA
WHAT SORT OF THING?
YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
OH, THAT. BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D WATCHED FAR WORSE IN GUATEMALA AND AFGHANISTAN BACK IN THE DAY.
YOU SEEMED QUITE HAPPY TO WATCH WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO THAT GIRL.
YEAH, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO HAVE TO WATCH YOU--
NAT, YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FIELD IS DIFFERENT--
AND HOW'S THAT?
THE DIFFERENCE, NAT, IS THAT NOW I'M AN ACCESSORY TO MURDER AND ASSAULT.
THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT THERE'LL BE COPS SCOURING THE STATE FOR MY CAR, WHICH RIGHT NOW I CAN'T AFFORD TO REPLACE. THE DIFFERENCE IS--
--THEY'LL NEVER FIND IT, PHIL.
YEAH, AND THE GIRL? LITTLE MISS HITCHER? HOW LONG BEFORE SHE GETS BORED WITH SITTING IN THAT SAFE HOUSE ALONE AND HITS THE LOCAL BARS WITH TALES OF HER FLAME-HAIRED AVENGING ANGEL?

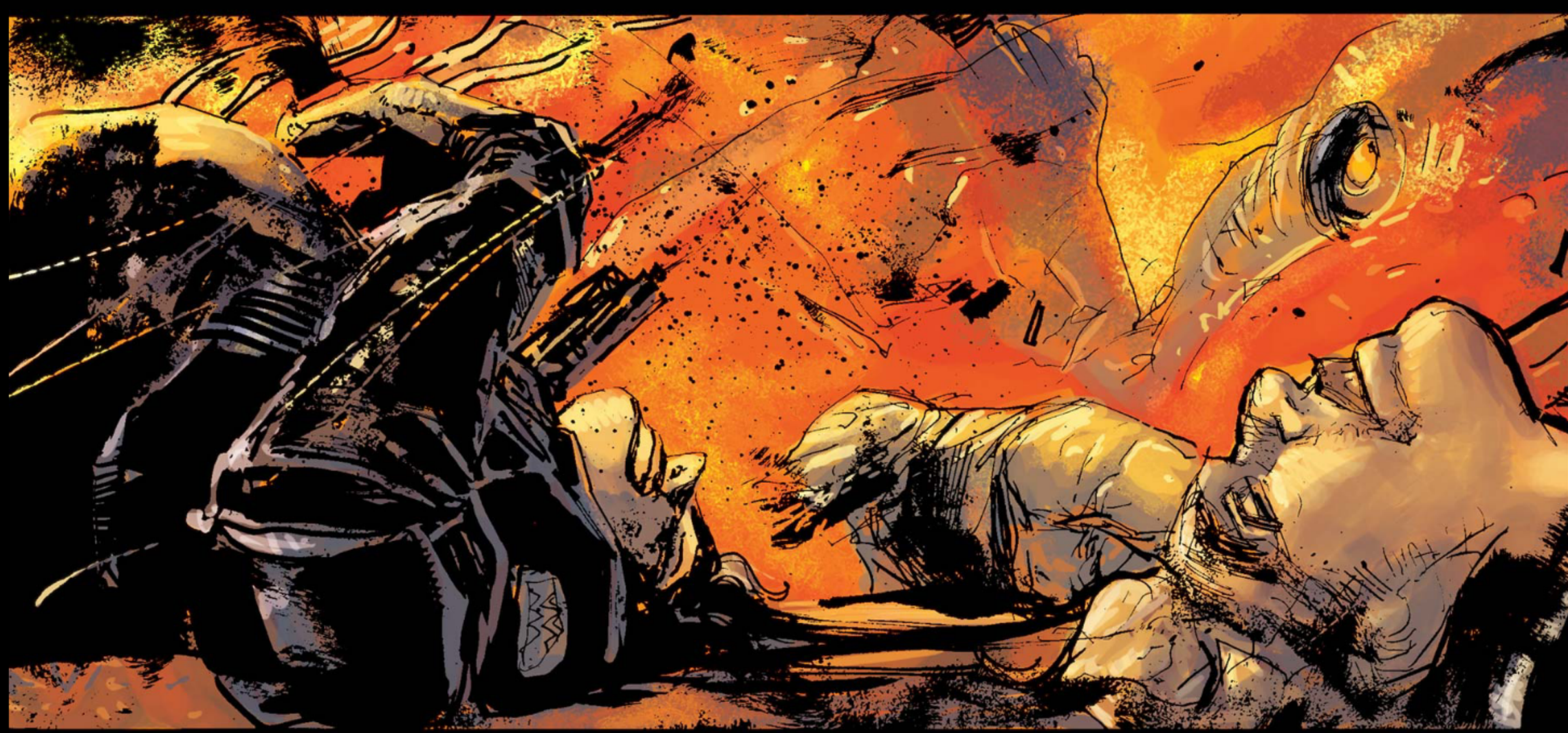

THE KID HITCHES ACROSS STATE WITH NOTHING BUT THE CLOTHES ON HER BACK AND A SWEET LITTLE SMILE. IF SHE'S GOING TO BE STUPID ENOUGH TO GET INTO A TRUCK WITH TWO STRANGE MEN...
MAYBE SHE SHOULD HAVE JUST STAYED WITH HER OVERFRIENDLY STEPFATHER, HUH?
AH, COME ON. THAT COULD BE A COMPLETE CROCK, AND YOU KNOW IT.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, PHIL? I MEAN, YOU WERE ALWAYS KIND OF SLEAZY, THAT WAS PART OF YOUR CHARM. BUT YOU USED TO CARE ABOUT THE BASICS. WHAT DID FURY DO TO YOU?
MIKHAIL BULGAKOV

BEFORE OR AFTER HE FIRED ME?
DRINKING ON THE JOB AND DISOBEYING ORDERS. CAN YOU BLAME HIM?
I BLAME EVERYONE. THAT'S A LOSER'S PREROGATIVE. AND UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT ORDERS I DISOBEYED, I SUGGEST YOU KEEP YOUR MORAL JUDGMENTS TO YOURSELF.
FINE--


--YOU CAN DO THE SAME FOR ME. I'LL CRIPPLE WHO I LIKE.
LOOK, I'M NOT NEARLY DRUNK ENOUGH TO TELL YOU WHAT FURY'S ORDERS WERE. LET'S STICK TO THE SUBJECT. WHAT ABOUT THE GIRL?
OKAY, THE GIRL. AFTER ALABAMA, WE'LL GO PICK HER UP AND-AND--
--AND I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING, OKAY?

YEAH, RIGHT.
LISTEN, WHEN YOU OPERATE IN THE FIELD THIS IS HOW IT WORKS, PHIL. SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO IMPROVISE.
GREAT. I AM REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO ALABAMA.

NORTH OF ALBUQUERQUE
NO OTHER TIRE TRACKS--SHE WALKED OUT, AT LEAST TO THE ROAD BACK THERE.
YEAH, AND PROBABLY TO ANOTHER WAITING VEHICLE. I DON'T THINK SHE'D MAROON HERSELF OUT HERE ALONE AND WITHOUT TRANSPORT, DO YOU?
HARD TO SAY. FILE SAYS SHE'S HAD DESERT SURVIVAL TRAINING. IN FACT, THEY SAY WITH THIS ONE, THERE'S NO WAY TO PREDICT ANYTHING SHE'LL DO.
YEAH, "THEY SAY". WELL, MY HUNCH HERE SAYS SHE HAD COMPANY.
OKAY, GO AHEAD--OPEN IT.



LIKE I SAID, MAX--WITH THIS ONE, THERE'S NO WAY TO PREDICT.
YEAH, WELL *ONE THING* I WILL PREDICT FOR YOU, KESTREL: SURE AS *APPLES ROT*, THE WIDOW IS HEADED FOR *A HOLE IN THE GROUND.*
TO BE CONTINUED...